

The Wakefields Are Featured

(Mrs. Kenneth Wakefield of Duxbury was featured last week in a two-part story in the Globe. Mary Cremen wrote the account. Here are excerpts.--Ed.)

While immobilized for months in that depressing Bradford, then Stryker frame after his brush with death last June 19, he (Sen. Ted Kennedy) instigated and worked on one of the most fascinating and revealing projects of his life -- a special kind of book about his father.

It is not intended to be a best seller for the private publication "In early Spring" will number but 500 copies.

As he described it in his letter, dated Oct. 12, to Ruth Wakefield of Toll House fame, "I am asking your help in putting together a collection of essays by persons like yourself who knew Dad intimately....It would be.... most important for his grandchildren."

To this last, Ruth Wakefield added this aside, "these children who have only seen him as he is now in a wheelchair."

The senator, in his letter, requested particularly "anecdotal accounts that would contribute to a profile of a man who has great warmth and affection."

She took this moment to show me a personal note to her and her husband Kenneth from Joseph Kennedy -- certainly astonishing to those unaware of the man's gentler side. It was dated three days after one Christmas. The note follows:

"Dear Folks:

We were all thrilled to receive the decorated Christmas stockings from the Toll House. It gave a very gay and festive look to our mantel and my five little grandchildren were particularly delighted with the peppermint sticks..."

All the Kennedys join me in sending you all our thanks.

WIDELY KNOWN

The nationally known hostess recalled the many years she had sent to the Kennedy children at school "big boxes of Toll House cookies and raspberry turnovers -- Jack's favorite."

There was a kind of half-satisfaction, half longing about her telling "when I sent them to Ted, in the hospital last year, I felt I'd gone full circle."

SECOND IN THE SERIES

In part two of her story, Mary Cremen writes of her interview of Ruth Wakefield in her home on Pill Hill off Bay Rd. with its picture window overlooking Kingston Bay. (But Ruth lives in Duxbury, Mary, not in Kingston.)

The talk went quickly to the letter she had received last October from Sen. Ted Kennedy of a plan -- that first took hold of his thoughts when he was immobilized in a Stryker frame at the New England Baptist Hospital -- for a book about his father.

The book was to be a "collection of essays by persons like yourself who knew Dad intimately," he wrote.

The young senator hoped they would add up to a profile of "a warm, affectionate man who, at the same time commands strong loyalties from those who know and have worked with him...."

The word "loyalty" obviously clicked with Ruth Wakefield.

"We only knew Mr. Kennedy as awfully kind. We never saw the tough side of him."

(She) recalled "we were just a little place 32 years ago and lived upstairs when he first came to us."

In her 700-word essay, "Happy Association," Ruth Wakefield wrote with unmistakable pride of being able to count on him to stop at the Toll House for early dinner

Said she with that spark of hers, "the most fun thing was always in Florida when I'd run into him at the Gulfstream track. I know he'd think to himself 'she's human after all -- not one of those cut and dry Yankees.'"

(She) told a charming, touching vignette that happened not too long ago when Joe Kennedy, his niece Ann Gargan and a nurse or two came to dinner at the Toll House.

She said "he was wheeled onto the terrace and we served him all his favorites. Everything went

perfectly until another party arrived and Mr. Kennedy worried and fretted they were watching."

"I quietly assured him nothing of the kind and later, as he was wheeled out past their table...he slowly lifted his unaffected left arm and saluted them."

every Wednesday -- on the way to Boston -- and Friday returning home to Hyannis Port.

"If it happened to be busy and no free table, he was never overbearing -- just walked around," she said.

"Grandfather Kennedy's favorites were a bowl of dark French onion soup au gratin, lobster newburg and broiled live, and for dessert....a double wedge of our Boston cream pie."

(She recalled) "the way he often went into the kitchen and said 'the best value for one's money in the U.S.A. is the Ford car, the Saturday Evening Post and the Toll House.'"

She recalled the day he told her husband Kenneth, "None of my boys wants to come into my business but I don't think I've done so badly -- do you?"